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THE RIMING CLUE IN DANTE

It is well known that here and there in the *Divine Comedy*, tho not with the invariability and symmetry usually characteristic of his technique, Dante's love of symbolism and double significance has moulded even his rime. The most familiar instance of this, no doubt, is the word *Cristo*, which, on the four occasions of its occurrence as the rime-word, is permitted to rime only with itself.¹ Then there are the two pairs of passages, noted by Professor Grandgent in his edition of the *Divina Commedia*, in which likeness of rime draws our attention to similarity of sense: the rimes in *-uri* which connect the blasphemers Vanni Fucci of *Inferno*, xxv,² and Capaneus of *Inferno*, xiv,³ and those in *-eda* which relate the prophecy in *Purgatorio*, xx,⁴ to the one in *Purgatorio*, xxxiii.⁵

In addition to these, we may note a connection between the *maledetto lupo* riming with *cupo*, addressed to Plutus as representative of Avarice in the Fourth Circle of the *Inferno*,⁶ and the *maledetta . . . lupa* riming with *cupa*, likewise addressed to Avarice on the Fifth Shelf of Purgatory;⁷ and it is to be observed that these latter lines alternate precisely with those ending in *-eda* already cited from *Purgatorio*, xx. There is also the singular repetition of the two rime-words *tarda* and *riguarda* used with *Piccarda* in *Purgatorio*, xxiv,⁸ which we find in the other passage in which the name of Forese's good and beautiful sister falls upon the rime.⁹

And since there is so little in Dante that comes by chance, it may even not be meticulous to remark the number of times that these rime-clues, if it be not overbold to call them such, occupy the same respective lines in different cantos: thus in *Purgatorio*, xx, and *Inferno*, xxv, the verses involved are 11-13-15; in *Inferno*, vii,

¹ *Par.*, xii, 71-73-75; xiv, 104-106-108; xix, 104-106-198; xix, 104-106-198; xxxii, 83-85-87.

² *Inf.*, xxv, 11-13-15.

³ *Purg.*, xx, 11-13-15.

⁴ *Inf.*, vii, 8-10-12.

⁵ *Purg.*, xxiv, 8-10-12.

⁶ *Inf.*, xiv, 44-46-48.

⁷ *Purg.*, xxxiii, 35-37-39.

⁸ *Purg.*, xx, 8-10-12.

⁹ *Par.*, iii, 47-49-51.

and *Purgatorio*, xx and xxiv, 8-10-12; and in *Paradiso*, xiv and xix, 104-106-108. In only two cases, however, does this identity of line-numbers occur in any couple of parallel passages supposed to be so connected with each other; that is, in the last two mentioned, which are two of the four *Cristo* passages, and in the *lupolupa* pair.

Although there are several sets of evidently associated passages where there is no such clue to be found in the rimes, still these instances suggest that in the attempt to establish another such association, a similarity in the rime-scheme would contribute a small bit of supporting evidence. This has apparently been overlooked by Mr. J. C. Carroll in developing his interesting hypothesis that the *donna santa e presta* who prompts Virgil to dispel the vision of the Siren on the Shelf of Sloth¹⁰ (usually identified with the *virtù che consiglia* of the preceding canto¹¹), is none other than Matelda, the girlish genius of the Earthly Paradise, whose cheerful innocent activity is the best weapon against that melancholia or neurasthenia which is Sloth, as well as against the sins of the flesh typified by the Siren. Mr. Carroll's statement of his theory is as follows:¹²

As symbol of the Active Life, it would be natural that she should rebuke this sin of Sloth, and the sins she leads to. In his picture of her in the Earthly Paradise, Dante seems to contrast her, point by point, with the deformed faculties and members of the other. Her tongue is singing *Delectasti*. Venus herself could not outshine the light of her "honest eyes." He remembers her feet and the movements of them, as of a lady in a dance. Her hands were picking flowers; and her colour was that of "one who warms herself in rays of love." One by one the stammering tongue and eyes asquint, the distorted feet and maimed hands and pallid colour are reversed, as if intentionally. And finally, it is surely strong corroboration of this view that the very word "alert" (*presta*) . . . is expressly applied to Matelda.¹³

What Mr. Carroll has omitted to note is that the word *presta* actually falls upon the rime in both passages, so that the linking rime in *-esta*,¹⁴ marking another of such pairs of associated

¹⁰ *Purg.*, xix, 26.

¹¹ *Purg.*, xviii, 62.

¹² John S. Carroll, *Prisoners of Hope, an Exposition of Dante's Purgatory*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1906, p. 251.

¹³ *Purg.*, xxviii, 83.

¹⁴ *Purg.*, xix, 26-28-30, and xxviii, 83-85-87.

passages, is perhaps a further corroboration of his theory. And the curious may still further observe that the second set of *presta* rimes occupies the same respective lines in the canto (83-85-87) as does the last set of *Cristo* rimes,¹⁵ thus making another small link in the delicate chain.

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QUEEN ANNE'S ACT: A NOTE ON ENGLISH COPYRIGHT

Throughout most of the Seventeenth Century, the Stationers' Company of London held a virtual monopoly of the book-trade by controlling practically all of the licensed presses. Copyright consisted of entry in their *Register*; only a member of the company might enter a book; and the object was to protect, not the author, but the printer who, by virtue of this entry, "owned" the copyright. An author could get protection only, as did Wither, by a special grant of letters patent from the crown. Thus, in due course, various members of the "Worshipful Company" had become the "proprietors" in perpetuity of most of the English classics—not to mention Homer, Virgil and Horace—and bought and sold rights and shares which they had commonly obtained without either paying the author or getting his consent. In 1694, however, the Licensing Act of Charles II finally expired; and, from that time, the guild had to defend its privileges, not through a monopoly of presses, but through a monopoly of publishing, enforced by a refusal to sell works not properly entered under the name of one or more of the Company's numbers. This method was fairly effective; but what the booksellers really wanted was an Act of Parliament to give legal finality to their case. In 1703, 1706, and 1709, they petitioned for a bill; and the final result was the famous Copyright Act of Queen Anne (8 Anne c 19/5). Swift is supposed to have made the original draft; and the title suggests that it was not quite what the booksellers themselves would have drawn up: *An Act for the Encouragement of Learning by Vesting Copies of Printed Books in the Authors*. Any one might,

¹⁵ *Purg.*, xxviii, 83-85-87, and *Par.*, xxxii, 83-85-87.